

## 2 Chronicles 31 – Thursday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017

**2 Chronicles 31** -- 1 Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke the sacred pillars in pieces, cut down the wooden images, and threw down the high places and the altars—from all Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh—until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned to their own cities, every man to his possession. 2 And Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites according to their divisions, each man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings and peace offerings, to serve, to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the camp of the LORD. 3 The king also appointed a portion of his possessions for the burnt offerings: for the morning and evening burnt offerings, the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths and the New Moons and the set feasts, as it is written in the Law of the LORD.

- The chapter starts off with all Israel officially renouncing idolatrous worship by smashing and breaking the images and altars.
- This after they had just extended their celebration of the Feast of Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread an additional week.
- And Hezekiah doesn't stop there he restores the proper priestly service so as to reinstitute worship in the newly opened temple.

4 Moreover he commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support for the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the Law of the LORD. 5 As soon as the commandment was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of grain and wine, oil and honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything.

- Here we're told Hezekiah commanded the people to bring their tithes and offerings in order to support the priests and Levites.
- It's interesting to note in verse five that as soon as this commandment was circulated, they brought in abundance their tithes.
- While we did study the importance of giving when we were in 2 Corinthians, I think it would be good to revisit it here tonight.

- I do so for several reasons, one of which is that there's an ongoing debate, concerning tithing as a New Testament principle.  
- Some argue that the Old Testament tithe was under the law, which means that under the New Covenant, no tithe is required.  
- Others argue the tithe is pre-law vis-a-vis the principle of first mention in Genesis where Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek.

- The question becomes, which is it? Is tithing applicable under the New Covenant or is it not applicable because it was the law.
- It is true that the New Testament doesn't specifically command tithing, however Jesus does speak of the tithe in the Gospel's.
- It's for this reason I believe the 10% as a tithe is the minimum by virtue of the fact that Jesus says it was not to be left undone.

Mat. 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

- I'll take it a step further and suggest scripture delineates the tithe as to the church, offerings to missions, and alms to the poor.
- However, if you're giving your tithes to the church, offerings to missions, or alms to the poor grudgingly, then don't give at all.
- The reason I say that is twofold, first, God doesn't need your money and second, God is not honored when you give grudgingly.

2 Corinthians 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

G. Campbell Morgan said it best this way, "It must be hilarious giving, giving out of the heart, because you love to give, not because you are bound to give."

- It's when we give in this way, with this heart that God is honored, such that, He in turn will pour out a financial blessing on us.
- However, when we refuse to give we tie the hands of God's blessing with the ropes of our disobedience in the area of finances.
- Sadly, in so doing we can find ourselves guilty of actually robbing God, and as such our finances will never be blessed of God.

Malachi 3:8–10 (NKJV) — 8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.

Haggai 1:2–7 (NKJV) — 2 "Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built."'" 3 Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" 5 Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! 6 "You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes." 7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!"

- The question becomes one of what if I can't afford to give, to which the response is actually, it's that you can't afford not to give.
- Moreover, it's not so much about how much you give, it's that you give, and it's not about what you have, it's what has you.
- I think of the widow who gave two mites in Luke 21 and how astonished the disciples were when Jesus said she gave the most.

Luke 21:1–4 (NIV) — 1 As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3 "Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. 4 All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 — 1 Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

6 And the children of Israel and Judah, who dwelt in the cities of Judah, brought the tithe of oxen and sheep; also the tithe of holy things which were consecrated to the LORD their God they laid in heaps. 7 In the third month they began laying them in heaps, and they finished in the seventh month. 8 And when Hezekiah and the leaders came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD and His people Israel. 9 Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. 10 And Azariah the chief priest, from the house of Zadok, answered him and said, "Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and have plenty left, for the LORD has blessed His people; and what is left is this great abundance."

- I find it interesting that it would take about four months to receive all of the tithes and offerings that were so generously given.
- So much so, that they didn't have enough room for to put all of the offerings so they just store and stock pile them in heaps.
- This because of what we're told in verse ten where it says the Lord has blessed His people with both plenty and abundance.

Proverbs 3:9-10 -- 9 Honor the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.

11 Now Hezekiah commanded them to prepare rooms in the house of the LORD, and they prepared them. 12 Then they faithfully brought in the offerings, the tithes, and the dedicated things; Cononiah the Levite had charge of them, and Shimei his brother was the next. 13 Jehiel, Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah were overseers under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king and Azariah the ruler of the house of God. 14 Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the keeper of the East Gate, was over the freewill offerings to God, to distribute the offerings of the LORD and the most holy things. 15 And under him were Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, his faithful assistants in the cities of the priests, to distribute allotments to their brethren by divisions, to the great as well as the small. 16 Besides those males from three years old and up who were written in the genealogy, they distributed to everyone who entered the house of the LORD his daily portion for the work of his service, by his division, 17 and to the priests who were written in the genealogy according to their father's house, and to the Levites from twenty years old and up according to their work, by their divisions, 18 and to all who were written in the genealogy—their little ones and their wives, their sons and daughters, the whole company of them—for in their faithfulness they sanctified themselves in holiness. 19 Also for the sons of Aaron the priests, who were in the fields of the common-lands of their cities, in every single city, there were men who were designated by name to distribute portions to all the males among the priests and to all who were listed by genealogies among the Levites.

- There's a very important principle that's woven into the fabric of these verses, as it relates to those who do the work of ministry.
- Namely, that of tithes and offerings being used to provide the needed financial support for the priests as well as their families.
- The reason being is that those in the ministry, doing the work of the ministry, need to devote themselves entirely to the ministry.

Of this one commentator wrote, "This is ...a reason why their wives and children were provided for out of the holy things, because they sequestered themselves from worldly affairs, by which they might otherwise have provided for their families, and entirely devoted themselves to holy administrations."

1 Corinthians 9:7-14 — 7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? 8 Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. 11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? 14 In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

1 Timothy 5:17-18 (NKJV) — 17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

20 Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the LORD his God. 21 And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered.

- This is one of those chapters that I wish didn't end where it did and when it did because of what we'll see in chapter thirty-two.
- It's for this reason that, next week, Lord willing, we'll pick it up here in verse twenty where God prospers and blesses Hezekiah.